

RAPA NUI JOURNAL

Vol 3, No 4

Winter 1989/90

A Layperson's Guide to *Ronoroŋo*¹

Part III

What Is *Ronoroŋo*?
Attempting to Set the Record Straight

by Alan Davis-Drake

*Around here, the only thing more uncertain
than the future, is the past.*

—Rapa Nui Aphorism

The first two parts in this series presented a sketchy history of the *ronoroŋo* experiences of Europeans visiting Rapa Nui over the last hundred or so years. These vignettes do not exhaust the information available to us, but instead hopefully create a reasonable background for this final section.

There remains the need to unravel the various diverse views of *ronoroŋo* existent today—particularly for the layman, the non-technical reader. The subject itself is mystifying; it needn't be.

Each 'view' of *ronoroŋo* was built upon a different approach developed through the trials and errors of past researchers. For the layman, the arguments are clouded in the puzzling concepts of linguistics and cryptography—the secrets of which lay hidden in athenaeums of scientific journals.

Speaking of *ronoroŋo* is speaking of a language no longer spoken or written. The precious few glyphs we have today were created more than 125 years ago. During the slave raids of 1859 and 1862, the last reported 'reader' of *ronoroŋo* died. What little we know, we have learned either from Rapanui with unsubstantiated claims to secret *ronoroŋo* literacy or from men-on-the-street, bystanders at public *ronoroŋo* readings.

The questions raised by the existence of these few priceless, wooden objects are many.² The most commonly asked by laymen and researchers alike are: "Is *ronoroŋo* a written language; can the glyphs be translated?" and "Where did the script originate?"

If the tablets represent a written language, human curiosity will not be satisfied until a verifiable translation can be made. Yet, if the glyphs on the tablets have some other significance, all the cloistered decoding one can entertain will not transform the scratchings into intelligible speech.

The point of "intelligible speech" raises an important issue. It is proposed (Metraux, 1940; Englert, 1974) that the *ronoroŋo* tablets will never be translated because the language in which they were conceived, written and chanted is a form of the Rapanui language no longer spoken today—before the infusion of Tahitian and the eventual ascendancy of Spanish. This is a popular belief on the island today.³

But before we ask the juicy questions, we must take a step backwards. We need to establish the groundwork for understanding how

Special Galapagos
feature in
On Other Islands
.....page 2

to go about making a translation, if a translation can be made.

And so, the questions pile up...

Part III of this series will deal with some of these questions. Because of space limitations, this final section of the *Guide* has been divided into two parts. The remaining section will appear as Part IV, in the *Spring* issue of *RNJ*—along with its companion *Road*

Guide to Ronoroŋo. The *Road Guide* contains everything you will need to locate and identify all existent *ronoroŋo* tablets (and fragments) in the museums around the world, as well as other Rapa Nui artifacts containing *ronoroŋo*-like glyphs. You will find a brief history of the discovery of each listed there.

Continued on page 4...

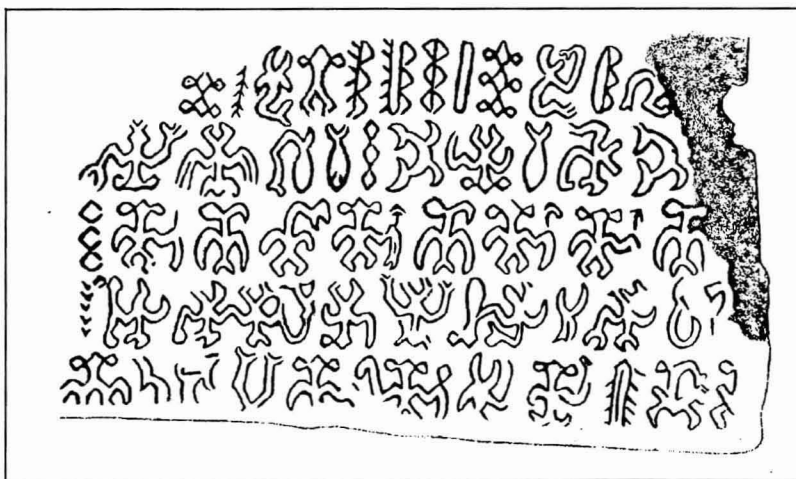


FIGURE 1: Portion of the tablet known as *Énchancrée*

On Other Islands...

Archaeology of the Galapagos Islands

A. M. Smith

In 1535, some 300 years before Darwin, the Bishop of Panama, Tomas de Berlanga, reached the Galapagos Islands. He was on his way to Peru, sailing close along the coastline when the ship was becalmed. Strong currents swept the vessel out to sea—and to the Galapagos. It took three weeks of struggling to return the 600 miles to Peru, some members of the party dying of thirst before they reached land.

It is believed that, if anyone else came earlier to these inhospitable islands, they probably arrived as did the Bishop—hapless visitors caught in the fierce currents, and not likely to have survived long in this barren environment.

The Galapagos Islands consist of six major islands and ten smaller ones, plus islets and rocks. The total land area is 7850 square miles. Annexed by Ecuador, the first permanent settlement was in 1832 but before that time, the islands of San Salvador (also known as James, or Santiago) and Santa Maria (Charles or Floreana) were favorite haunts of buccaneers. The latter island contains caves with hewn sleeping benches and fireplaces, dating from the buccaneer period.

In an effort to prove that the art of navigation was well developed in coastal Tiahuanaco times and capable of making round trip voyages to the Galapagos from South America (and by extension that South American Indians were ocean-going travelers), Thor Heyerdahl and Arne Skjølsvold mounted an archaeological expedition to the Galapagos Islands in 1953. They excavated and collected traces of human visits, some of which they believe to be prehistoric. The artifact list includes 2033 pottery shards, 4 flints, 2 chalky stone items, 1 obsidian object, and 1 clay whistle. All these were found on or just below surface at seven different loci on three islands (Terrell 1986:86). What conclusions can be drawn from the evidence depends upon how these artifacts are interpreted.

Present at all the sites worked by Heyerdahl and Skjølsvold were historic items including porcelain, glazed pottery shards, glass, nails, etc., which were mixed with “pre-Spanish” finds. As all “prehistoric” material was mixed up with European goods, critics dismissed the claims that these islands were settled in pre-Spanish times, particularly in the light of the logs of British Royal Navy captains who noted in 1794 that the ground was littered with broken jars at that early date.

However, as a result of their expedition, Heyerdahl and Skjølsvold concluded that: a number of different landing parties reached the Galapagos at different times in the past; they came from Ecuador and Peru; they sailed deliberately and used these islands as camping bases while fishing; they brought along women and pottery vessels; and did not stay permanently or the island would have received a considerable permanent population. Therefore, the Galapagos were

“a port of call well known to aboriginal deep sea voyagers from Peru and Ecuador.”

The unspoken inference is that sailing and navigation were well enough developed so that ancient South Americans could travel round trip to the Galapagos, thus supporting Heyerdahl’s speculations about the role of American Indians in settling Polynesia.

Neither fishhooks nor fish bones were found in the sites excavated and no attempts were made to date the “aboriginal” pottery; identification was made only by stylistic similarity.

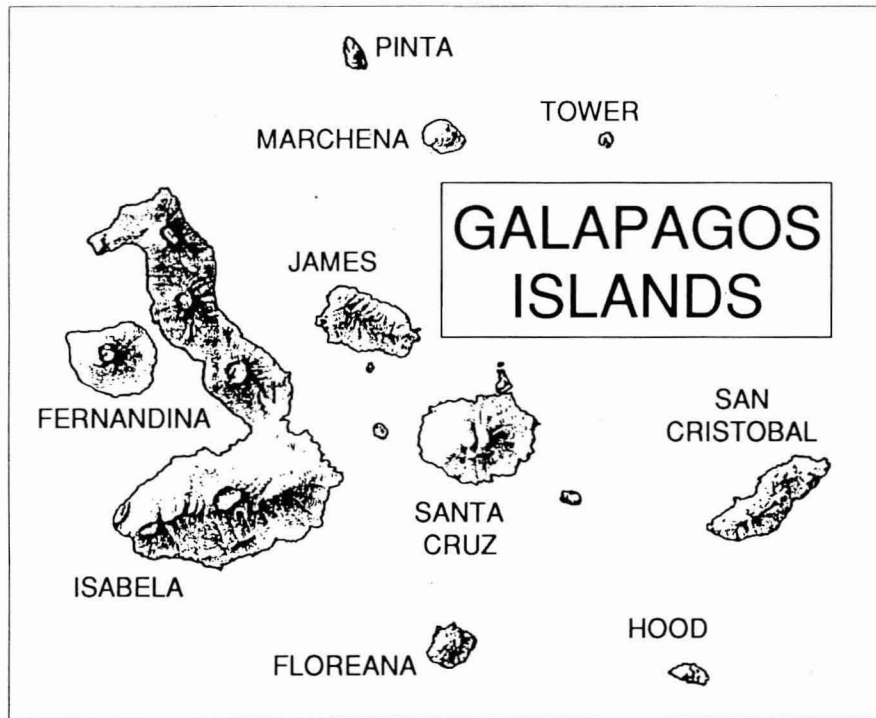
While it may be that some early group(s) from South America landed here and left behind some pottery shards, did they come to fish—or did they arrive like the Bishop, by accident? And if it took a sailing ship three weeks to fight its way back to the continent, what chance might a raft have to make such a round trip against the currents? If they were not round trip voyaging, what were the chances of survival in the difficult Galapagos environment?

Consider what happens when an uninhabited island is first discovered: safe arrival does not mean that one’s troubles are over. The settlers must survive the early years of trial and error, start a new generation, survive ecological crunches in the form of drought, natural disasters, etc. It is a “given” that a small founding population is not likely to survive; groups smaller than 80 persons are under a high risk of extinction, particularly if the islands have limited resources. Also, groups cut off by long distances from others have a higher expectation of failure. There are many examples in Polynesia where attempts at island colonization failed when environmental challenges proved too severe and pioneering groups either left or failed to survive (Kirch 1984:95).

Taking Heyerdahl and Skjølsvold’s evidence under consideration, it appears there are other possible scenarios. Certainly the uninviting local environment must have played a major role in determining what people could or would have done if they had landed there in prehistoric times. The bottom line is that, at this time, no positive evidence exists that people came here before the Spanish in the 16th century; further archaeological work needs to be done on these fascinating islands.

References

- Heyerdahl, Thor and Arne Skjølsvold. Archaeological evidence of pre-Spanish visits to the Galapagos Islands. *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology*, #12 [American Antiquity XXII(2):3]; 1956.
- Kirch, Patrick V. *The evolution of the Polynesian chiefdoms*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Terrell, John. *Prehistory in the Pacific Islands*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986
- The response of Dr. Arne Skjølsvold of the Kon Tiki Museum can be found on the following page...*



Response

by Dr. Arne Skjølsvold, Kon Tiki Museum

I admit that in the material there are many pot-sherds without sufficient characteristics to allow for secure classification, but there are also abundant samples of characteristic ware, like variants of Black Chimu and Coast Tiahuanaco types. Since it is unlikely that these sherds have been spread on the Galapagos by buccaneers or other post-Spanish visitors, American Indians must have reached the islands in pre-historic times.

Letters to the Editor

Dear editor,

"We read with interest that there is an imperative call for a better teaching of Rapa Nui at school, but in a hundred years there has not been a single Chilean who knew Rapa Nui. Easter Islanders who know their language are no teachers and mainlanders who are teachers don't know Rapa Nui and will never learn it. The foreigner who best knew the language was Englert but, according to all islanders whom we asked, even his knowledge was rudimentary. He used Rapa Nui words, but his brain functioned in German so that his sermons required translation from Rapa Nui into Rapa Nui. Anthropologists who at least have an acceptable working knowledge of any Polynesian language are an infinite minority and there is no sign of a change. In the Marquesas there is a law that obliges the schools to teach Marquesan, but where are the teachers and where is the institution to train teachers? Anthropologists are peeping into everything in Polynesia but avoid learning languages as the devil avoids the crucifix. If an adequate teaching of Rapa Nui is introduced, it will be something like the world's eighth marvel...."

Annette Bierbach and Horst Cain
Germany

In reference to stratigraphy, the sites have very little humus. Under such conditions there will be no stratigraphical separation between old and recent material deposited... probably also explaining why no fishhooks and fishbones were found. Exposed to wind and weather, osteological material would probably disintegrate. But whatever the reason may be, the fact is that such material did not exist at all, not even from post-Spanish and modern camp sites, even though fishing must have been a main occupation throughout all times for people staying in the Galapagos.

As pointed out, no attempts were made to date the aboriginal material, except for stylistic comparisons. Under normal conditions C-14 dating would have been carried out. The stratigraphical situation, however, made samples of charcoal unsuited for such analysis.

We agree that much work remains to be done in the Galapagos Islands, since our expedition had very limited time at its disposal.

The authors stick to the claim that the Galapagos Islands were visited by South American Indians in pre-Spanish times. Whether the islands were reached intentionally or by accident is of course difficult to answer with certainty. There is however little doubt that balsa raft navigation was sufficiently developed to allow pre-Spanish South Americans to sail round trip to the Galapagos Islands for the purpose of exploiting their rich fishing grounds.

The possibility should not be ignored that even *totor* reed boats might have been used in the long sea voyages of the early Peruvian mariners. Thor Heyerdahl's expeditions with the reed boats *Ra* and *Tigris* have shown that these peculiar types of watercraft are highly sea worthy and suitable for deepsea voyaging.

Dear Editor,

Thank you for your letter of October 8th concerning the Medical Expedition to Easter Island. The Expedition was organized by the World Health Organization and we carried out a comprehensive examination of the Easter Island population with the purpose of obtaining base data prior to the construction of the airport. This was fully accomplished since all Islanders were examined. I shall prepare for you a short article about the Expedition which included members from U.S.A., Norway, Sweden, England and Switzerland, as well as Canada. There was... a movie entitled "Island Observed" which was made by the National Film Board of Canada in 1966 and which you may be interested in seeing. You could obtain same through the Canadian Consul General in California.

We shall gladly subscribe to your Journal as of January 1990 which I find most interesting and useful.

Stanley C. Skoryna, M.D., Ph.D.
Former Director of WHO Medical
Expedition to Easter Island

Rongorongo con't...

The Term *Rongorongo*—The Question of a Name

"Tablets," "boards," "sticks," "staves," "talking boards..." What is the correct translation of *kohau rongorongo*, the correct way to refer to them in translation?

The complete, traditional term for the objects themselves is *kohau motu mo rongorongo*. Englert (1974) translates this as "the lines of inscriptions for recitation." (See Table 1.)

This coupled with reports of public *rongorongo* readings where *taŋata rongorongo*, or *rongorongo* men, assembled with their boards to recite their texts out loud at public readings (Thomson, 1886; Routledge, 1919) points out that the term *rongorongo*, *per se*, refers only to the tablets themselves.

The Rongorongo Count

Barthel (ESEN-BAUR)	(1989)	29
Englert	(1974)	22
Butinov/Knorozov	(1957)	21
Métraux	(1940)	20

TABLE 2

There is certainty that the glyphs incised on other objects with *mana* had their own ritual significance; that is, they were incised in a ritual manner, with accompanying chants and ceremony. Besides wooden boards, there are

glyphs on other wooden objects in museums today. These include *rei miro* (pectoral ornaments), a fish, and even a birdman figure, a *taŋata manu*. These objects cannot rightly be listed among the *kohau rongorongo*. Except for the Santiago Stick, most contain either a single row of glyphs or scattered groups. Also they have not been associated with the traditional ceremonies in which legends, chants, lineage lists, lists of conquered or executed opponents, and other recessitations were made. A more precise term for the glyphs themselves is *rona*.

The Inventory—The Question of How to Count

There are popular misunderstandings surrounding the actual count of inventory of *rongorongo* tablets. These problems are understandable. Table 2 lists representative sample counts.

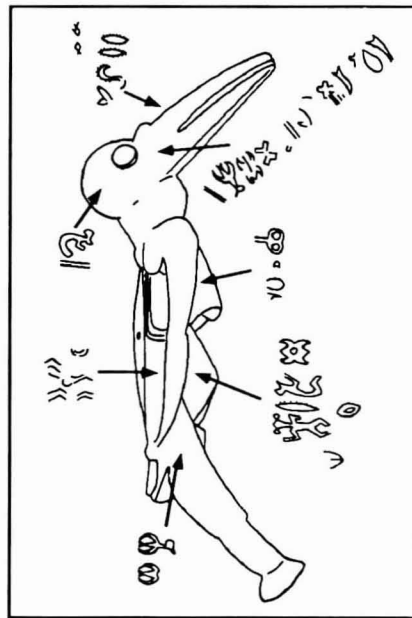


FIGURE 2: Sample of glyphs and their locations on the New York *Tangata Manu* (After Esen-Bauer, 1989)

First there is the problem of exactly what should be counted and secondly, once the 'types' have been established, there is the question of authenticity. Is it a reproduction? Is it an intentional counterfeit? Was it created specifically for sale to curious tourists?

An authentic *rongorongo* would be one created by trained *taŋata rongorongo*. Understanding what we have might give us a clue to their purpose.

As already mentioned, one misleading approach has been the practice of referring to any wooden piece with "glyphs" on it as a "*Kohau rongorongo*." Most lists include any item with

glyphs or signs created before the advent of commercial carving; these would include numerous "tablet" fragments, *rei miro*, and a large staff, as well as various paper documents. For example, a recent publication⁴ displays a full color plate of a *moai taŋata manu* emblazoned with the caption "*Kohau Rongo-rongo*." (Figure 2) This is presumably because it contains randomly carved glyphs on its body. Neither Métraux nor Butinov/Knorozov include this in their inventories.

Butinov and Knorozov include signs written on paper and collected by Routledge in 1914. They are attributed to Tomenika,⁵ a Rapanui living on the island at that time. These signs were considered by Tomenika to be *tau*, an "inferior form of script."⁶ Tomenika died shortly after Mrs. Routledge left the island. Other inferior forms also appear on various wooden objects collected on Rapa Nui

RAPANUI TERM	MÉTRAUX	JAUSSEN	ENGLERT	BARTHEL
<i>kohau</i>	stick, staff, stem of a plant, shaft of a lance	"intelligent wood" <i>ko</i> = intelligent <i>hau</i> = hibiscus wood	<i>ko</i> = article designating an emblematic object: the lines, the known lines <i>hau</i> = "thread" or "cord" or "a line traced with a cord, a straight line" ⁴	
<i>te kohau rongorongo</i>	the stick of the <i>rongorongo</i> men	"talking wood"	"lines of recitation"	"talking board" or "script tablet"
<i>kohau motu mo rongorongo</i>			"the lines of inscription for recitation"	
<i>taŋata rongorongo</i>	knowledgeable men			
<i>maori kohau rongorongo</i>			wise men or masters (<i>maori</i>) who can read and write signs	

TABLE 1: Comparative translations of the term *rongorongo*

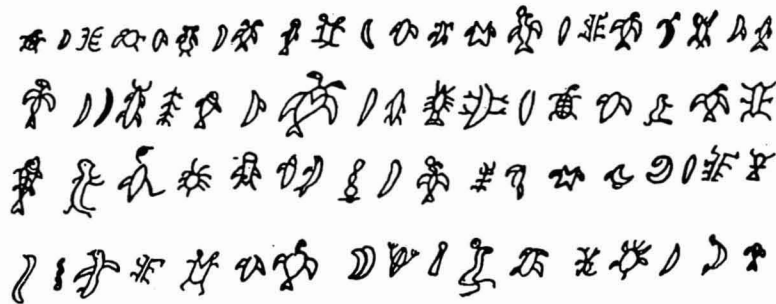


FIGURE 3: Tau Script: Tomenika's sample. Collected by Mrs. Routledge

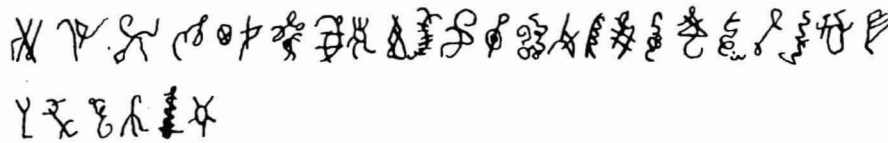
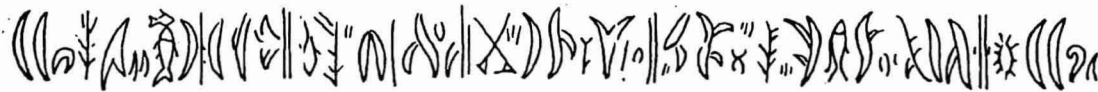


FIGURE 4: Tau Script: Sample from the Juan Haoa Ms. Collected by Heyerdahl.

FIGURE 5: The Barcelona *Rei Miro* Script, with tau-like script. Known to be modern. (Transcribed by Amorós i Gonnell)

during the late 19th Century, notably *rei miro*. (C.f. Amorós i Gonnell, 1989 and others.) (Figures 3, 4 & 5)

Inventory Breakdown

Tablets	14
Tablet Fragments	9
Staff/Stick/Ceptor	1
Rei Miro/Others	4
Total	28

TABLE 3

When they were first being discovered, "*rongo rongo*" was the name given to flat boards with systematic rows of glyphs. Eventually the glyphs themselves came to be called *rongo rongo* and whatever object had such carvings

on it were considered *rongo rongo*. A close scrutiny of the inventory in the forthcoming **Comparative Chart of Rongo rongo (Road Guide)** will show the variety of artifacts incised with glyphs. They have been placed in major categories, with their totals shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Where Did *Rongo rongo* Originate?

That *rongo rongo* had its origins in the Polynesian heritage seems today a given fact—at least to the layman. Such belief was not always in the forefront, particularly since the advent of Thor Heyerdahl's popular South American theories.

In 1968 Heyerdahl presented a detailed discussion of "The Problem of Origin" of *rongo rongo*, primarily written to support his theories.

In his 1968 review of Part II of the Easter Island Norwegian Expedition's *Reports*, Kenneth Emory focused attention on this.

...no sound evidence is produced to show that the writing was in existence prior to the witnessing of European writing by the chiefs, who were required to affix their "signatures" to the document of annexation to Spain in 1700. It was more than 90 years thereafter that Europeans first reported seeing the script. This is the process of Heyerdahl's argument for a Peruvian origin of the script, statements are made that are vital to the acceptance of the conclusions but that are not justified by the evidence given.

Emory presents a totally unique perspective when he suggests "that the Easter Island script is post-European and a result of the stimulation of European writ-

Glyphs On Paper

Treaty "Signatures"	1
Tomenika's <i>Tau</i> Sample	1
20th Cent. Native Ms.	6
Total	8

TABLE 4

ing." At the time of the signing of Spanish annexation in 1770, the Rapanui had no writing but instead, the "signing" experience was enough to spontaneously spur an opportune scribe into adopting this European method of expression. (Figure 6)

The Rapanui simply went on to imitate and augment the petroglyph designs prevalent on the island at that time. Emory proposed that such an island sage might have seen this as a way "...not to supplant memory, for they continued to memorize chants in material form, a practice found elsewhere in East Polynesia" (cf. Emory 1947:37-38).

This would fit well with other occurrences on the island at this time—a period of social uncertainty. In the 18th Century, statue building and transport were on the decline. With the opportunity to develop *ronorono*, the priest once more could turn the upper hand—much as they did with the emerging importance of the birdman ceremonies on Orongo. The leaders struggling for power now had a new, mysterious, *mana*-laden way to hold unifying control over the diverse clans of the island. With the invention of *ronorono* came further social unification as well as social and religious subjugation under the leadership of the *ariki* and the priests.

In his review of Part I of the *Reports* (Emory, 1963), he raised a similar argument. Heyerdahl responded with a lengthy discussion of "The Problems of Origin," focusing on the picture writing of the Cuna Indians of Panama and NW Columbia, pointing out that they painted on wooden tablets. He mentions Nordenskiöld's 1928 report that the "picture writing [was] made... for recording songs of all kinds... is read from the bottom, from right to left and then from left to right, and so on." Unfortunately Heyerdahl gives us no writing samples. In a recent publication, Heyerdahl strings together a series of disparate "proofs" to support his claim to "solving the mystery" of Easter Island; he does not mention the Cuna script. Heyerdahl mentions the Cuna again in 1975 but does not supply examples.

Métraux does provide us with some. (Figure 7.) It is conceivable that Métraux is the one who humorously suggested the connection to the Cuna Indians (and the Ojibwa) in the first place. He used the same methods as Hevezy (see Part II) to compare *ronorono* to the Cuna script—that is, he found *select* glyphs to compare, rather than considering the entire corpus. This of course presents a misleading image.

Butinov and Knorozov (1957) state that *ronorono* glyphs "reflect the local environment and culture." They are clearly Polynesian. During research for this series, observations showed numerous similar motifs in petroglyph art and *ronorono* glyphs.

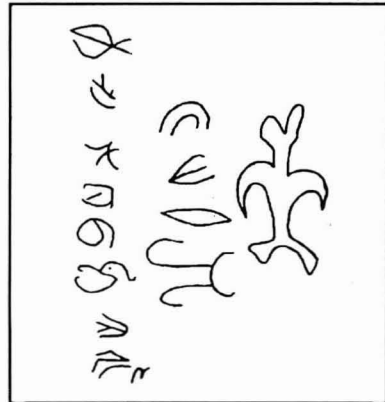


FIGURE 6:

The 1770 Treaty "Signatures"

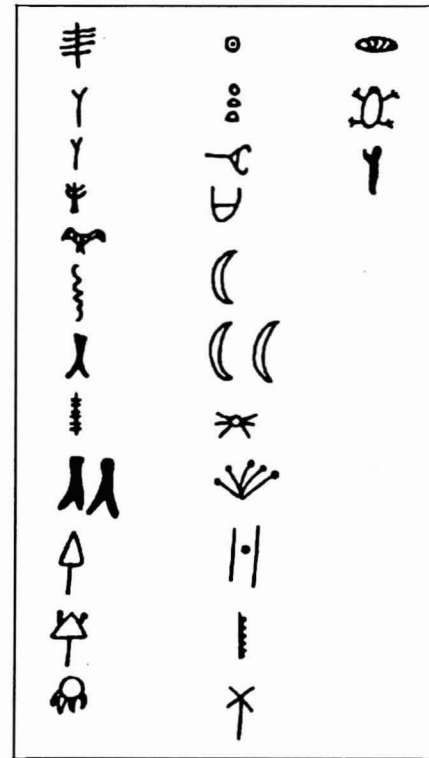


FIGURE 7: Métraux's List of *ronorono*-like Cuna Glyphs

A ceremonial parallel between the use of feathered staves on both Easter Island and the Marquesas has been noted by Métraux. He compares the boards with *huhu*, Marquesan ritual staves, or "sticks with feathers." This brings immediately to mind the Santiago Stick, which undoubtedly had ritual significance. Routledge (1919) mentions the use of *heu-heu*, or "feathers on top of sticks" in connection with *ronorono* ceremonies. There are indications of this in *ronorono* glyphs. (See Figure 8, glyph 160.) This connection is helpful in legitimizing a Polynesian connection between the glyphs and their origins. Even if a direct descendancy cannot be made, that is, proof of the geographical origin or inspirational source of *ronorono* writing, this similar cultural expression points us in the direction of Polynesia and not, for example, South America.

It can also be noted as mentioned by Métraux (1940:392): "In the Tuamotus the word *rongo* is applied to formal chants about the exploits or feats of a hero... *Rongo* is also the name of a 'morning chant for a deceased hero.'"

In commenting on his work on translating the *ronorono* tablets, Barthel said that his "...reading [of] the tablets shattered the theory that Easter Island did not belong to Polynesia but had

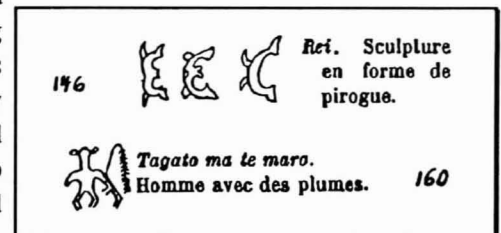


FIGURE 8:

Samples from the "Jaussen/Metoro Translation"

been colonized from America. Names, phrases and allusions on the talking boards showed unequivocally that the Easter Islanders stemmed from the same culture as the Polynesians..." (Barthel, 1958)

In his work with 20th century written manuscripts, Barthel (1974) mentions the glyph for *ha'u*, or "feathered crowns." These were worn by the original scouts who traditions tells first explored the island before the official discovery by Hotu Matu'a. One of these scouts was most probably an intellectual and a scribe—a *taneta roñoroño*.

"[A] *huhu* is a staff or branch whose surface has been changed or covered. Either the bark is removed and the bare wood is given a dark stain, or the staff is completely wrapped with the fibrous bark of reeds and feathers or feathered garlands are attached to them. Such feather standards were among the customary offerings presented to the island king and are mentioned in the Rongorongo texts. *Huhu* is one of the four insignia and gifts... brought to Anakena by the people during specific periods of time (Barthel, 1974).

Feathered staffs were also used to mark residential boundaries. In his analysis of *roñoroño*, Métraux quotes de Harlez:

The tangata rongorongo of Easter Island are better understood when compared with those of the Marquesas and of Mangareva. In the Marquesas the *tuhuna o'ono* was "master chanter, tribal bard, or ceremonial priest; who presided in all important ritual, and served as repository and teacher of sacred and traditional lore." (Harlez, 1896:145)

He was also the teacher of sacred chants and director of chanting at family feasts. The word *o'ono* is the equivalent of *rongo* since in the Marquesan dialect the *r* is dropped and the nasal velar (*ng*) becomes *n*."

Thomson told us that Hotu Matu'a knew how to read and write *roñoroño*. Barthel (1974) goes on with this to say:

...the most important cultural heritage [of the Rapa Nui and their founder Hotu Matu'a is] the Rongorongo script which had been developed in Hiva...

There can be no doubt that the knowledge of the classical Easter Island script was at one time the monopoly of a privileged few. It is hoped that further work on the Rongorongo texts will reveal what the tablets have to say about the arrival of Hotu Matua. So far, this final check of the immigrant traditions is still missing."

Barthel says that *roñoroño* probably started in Polynesia as knotted sticks used as memory devices and slowly evolved from

there. This theory is supported by one of the translations for *kōhau roñoroño*: 'talking sticks.' "The strongly mnemonic nature of the catchword system certainly supports the idea that the writings grew out of a memory-aid device." (Barthel, 1958)

Heyerdahl has recently published a coffee-table book in which he finally claims to have solved the mysteries of Easter Island and he devotes a small section to "The riddle of the written tablets." As with other subjects in the rest of the book, he expresses historical evidence or studies made before the 1950's and only lingers momentarily, in a few sentences, on contemporary work other than his own. His self-serving comments add nothing to our knowledge of *roñoroño*.

His presentation on *roñoroño* in 1975, in *The Art of Easter Island* was far more complete. Again he continued to find numerous connections to South America. An analysis of Heyerdahl's 17 'similarities' between *roñoroño* motifs and Tiahuanacan art is not within the realm of this present work. His persistence shows imagination. It is unfortunate that valuable time must be spent on refutations.

Are Any Tablets Identical?

In their analysis of *roñoroño*, Butinov and Knorozov (1957) pointed out a handful of the world famous *roñoroño* duplicate each other—they contain the same "text." This was also noted by Métraux (1940:401) and Kudrjavitsev (1949).

Actually, it was a group of Russian school children who made this discovery. Their youthful curiosity led them to discovering two instances where glyphs repeat themselves in their entirety or in part on separate tablets.

Were you to visit the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Santiago next year, to see the famous "Small Santiago Tablet," you would probably not

be aware it contained the same text you saw last spring on your visit to the British Museum while admiring the famous "London Tablet"—unless you have an expert eye, a photographic memory or the persistent curiosity of small boys. The group of glyphs on the two sides of the London Tablet are the same as a group that the Santiago Tablet exhibits on *one side*. This is not to intimate a hoax, but rather to elicit the question "Why?"

Because of the limitations of this article, I will let this question linger with the reader...

How Do I Read a *Roñoroño* Tablet?

Previous writers on this subject have tersely described the methods used by the *taneta roñoroño* to read the tablets. Routledge writes "The method of reading was... to read one row from left to

Tablets with Identical Glyphs

Correspondence 1

Large Santiago Tablet
Large Leningrad Tablet

Correspondence 2

Small Leningrad Tablet
Small Santiago Tablet
The London Tablet

TABLE 5

right, the method known as boustrophedon, from the manner in which an ox ploughs a furrow."

Bishop Jaussen (1893:252) gave a fuller explanation after observing his informant Metoro:

He turned it, turned it again, looking for the beginning of the text, and then he started to chant. He chanted the lowest line, from left to right. Arriving at the end, he chanted the nearest line above, from right to left, the third from left to right, the forth from right to left, like the plowing of oxen. When he arrived at the top line, he passed from the recto to the nearest line on the verso and descended, line after line, like oxen plowing both sides of the hill, starting on the lower side and ending at the bottom on the opposite side. The reader can turn the tablet after each line if he does not want to read the signs upside down.

Curiously, in his attempt to translate the script on one tablet, Carroll (1892) came upon yet another way to read the glyphs. His translation was based on first reading every other line, that is all the upright glyphs, and then turning the tablet over once, to read the remaining lines, the ones which were now upright. Today this is not believed to be correct.

Harrison (1874) thought the tablets were not turned at all, "otherwise the sides would have been worn as much as the ends, which is not the case." It is now believed that the tablets we have were not particularly old at the time of their acquisition and so were probably little used.

Like children's rebus writing, *ronorono* cannot express complete sentences—articles, conjunctions and etc. are omitted. (More on this in the next section.) "Reading" a *ronorono* tablet would be more like singing a song, with only the main catch words available. You'd see the gist of the song, but you would have had to sing it many times before to fill in all the missing words. Barthel refers to *ronorono* tablets as "cue-cards."

How Can I Make a Translation?

Here is the heart of the matter and the most difficult to express in simple terms. The methods of translation appear elusive, even after careful readings of published "explanations."

As described previously, the job of beginning a translation began in 1870 with Bishop Jaussen in Tahiti. Subsequent attempts at translation have either built upon his efforts or carefully rejected them.

Whether the work of Jaussen and his Rapanui informant (Metoro Taouaoure) is valid is a mute point—it cannot be ignored. At best, the example of their work together, (and similarly 16 years later with Paymaster Thompson and his unnamed Rapanui informant) points a cautious finger for all field researchers. How does one ask the right questions? What was lost because one didn't?

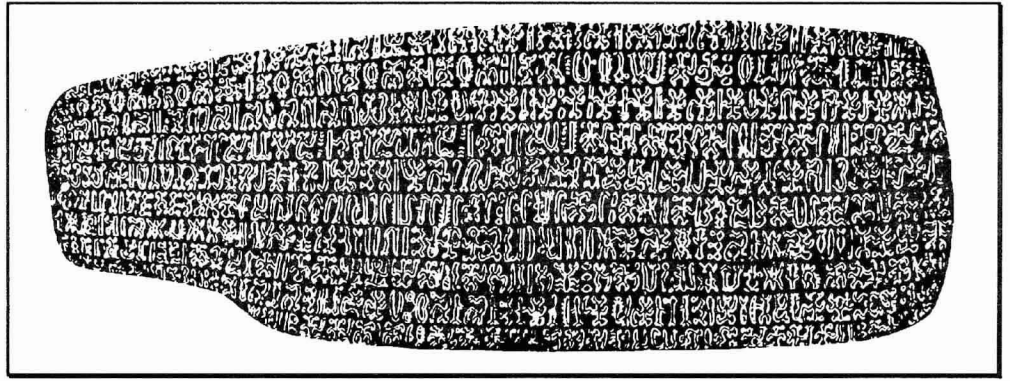


Figure 9: The Aroukou Kurenga *ronorono* tablet. Now in Rome.

Previously discussed were Thomson and Crofts's separate experiences with native "interpreters." These encounters resulted in each one unkindly (and possibly incorrectly) calling their informants "liars." Forcing their informants into expressing themselves sequentially and linearly may have deprived us of the hope of truly understanding the method and purpose of *ronorono*.

Previously discussed in Part II of this series were 19th early 20th Century experiments with working on translations. This work continued into modern times.

Métraux

Alfred Métraux produced two different studies of *ronorono*. The first was his detailed refutation of Hevezy's analogies between the Easter Island and the Indus Valley scripts. This was, in part, previously mentioned.

His second study was included at the end of his *Ethnology of Easter Island*. He was the first to present a methodical analysis of a particular *ronorono*, choosing primarily Aroukou Kurenga and to some extent *the Oar*. His first step was "to find the limits of each individual sign." Some *rona* may be isolated glyphs, while others may be pairs or series of linked glyphs. Métraux noted that there were variations of individual or grouped signs. For example, the general form of a particular human-like figure may remain the same, but the object in his hand may change, or an arm or leg might be omitted. The question arose: Are these changes significant, or merely a slip of the carving tool, so to speak.

Having knowledge of various Polynesian traditions, Métraux reasoned that the repetition of groups of glyphs at definite intervals would be consistent with Polynesian chanting. But he finally concluded that groups of glyphs "show that the variants had no particular value." He did not say why.

He estimated that there are about 100 primary glyphs. All the rest are variations. It may be interesting to note that the most frequently repeated glyph was that for the *manu tara*, the sooty tern. Birdman figures in the sitting position which have the *manu tara* head total 34 items. Métraux calculated 20% of the glyphs on Aroukou Kurenga were devoted to a bird motif. Human or human-like figures appear on about 1/3 of the figures—this includes the birdmen. Métraux has a full breakdown of the major figures, but for purposes here, his calculations showed him the script was most

probably pictographic and not phonetic or syllabic. "It seems logical to suppose that the tablets were mnemonic devices for recording chants which were also memorized."

Later Métraux appeared to contradict himself by saying there was no reason why priests needed *ronorono* as mnemonic devices. Métraux hypothesize that *ronorono* evolved from staves (*kohau*), which were used for beating the rhythm of chants. At first the glyphs were ornaments on these staves; once they became conventionalized, they became traditional. The method of writing in boustrophedon began then and it is easy to understand why such a system was used to write on a long stick such as the *Santiago Staff*.

He also believed tablets contained not single chants, but a series.

Barthel

Thomas Barthel started his work on translating *ronorono* with a simple idea, although the effort necessary to actualize it was vast. First he listed all the signs on all the known tablets and fragments and identified each with a number. This was the beginning of his statistical analysis. After this tedious job he concluded that the signs represented whole words or ideas rather than an alphabet or syllables. There would be little duplication if the glyphs were an alphabet.

Next Barthel hunted down Jausen's original, unpublished notes of Metoro Tauara's translation. "Those lines of Polynesian syllables... became my 'Rosetta Stone...' A knowledge of the Polynesian languages, as well as cryptographic analysis, proved to be decisively helpful in deciphering the signs." (Barthel, 1958)

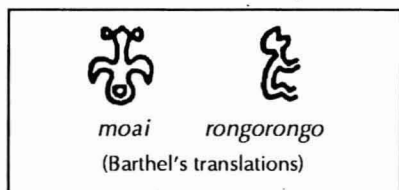
Barthel realized that Metoro's translations appeared to be gibberish because he "had been in the position of a schoolboy asked to explain a university textbook," and so had read many of the glyphs inaccurately.

He says that the "Easter Island script was made up in large part of stylized outlines of picture objects. In particular there are representations of the human figure which are "pantomimic expressions" suggesting a "gesture language." These gestures help him to understand what certain glyphs could mean.

Whereas Métraux says there were "100 primary glyphs," Barthel says "the script has only about 120 basic elements, but they are combined... to form more than 1,000 compound signs. Most of the signs are used as ideograms, usually in the form of words."

We now know that *ronorono* is a rudimentary phonetic writing system, using picture symbols to express ideas as well as objects. This can be done because Rapanui, like other Polynesian languages, has a large percentage of homonyms, words which sound the same but have different meanings.

Unfortunately I did not have English translations of Dr. Barthel's two current contributions to the study of *ronorono* in time for review here—Barthel 1989a and 1989b. The abstract from Dr.



Barthel's presentation at the Senckenberg Museum's Easter Island Symposium explains his current work with developing a key to the translation of the Santiago Staff.⁷ He gives hints as to the tedious process of discovering and uncovering a translation, including his finding the same set of information painted on both the Belfast *tapa* figure and the Santiago Staff and how this is helping him "to establish definite and reliable values of certain signs." He has found "components of one coherent information sequence running through [the] total text." This would mean there is a definite logic to the glyphs on the Santiago Staff, a logic which implies intent. They are not just a series of random glyphs. It is possible he has discovered a *ronorono* version of a "Polynesian Book of the Dead," for he believes the Staff to have "inventories of the nightly underworld..." and "supernatural rules for underworld reigns connected with the fate of the soul and the fertility of the living." Barthel also alludes to "fruitful comparisons with traditions on other Polynesian Islands," which brings us once again to the question of the origins of the *ronorono* tradition.

Since *ronorono* could not express full sentences, "the tablets had to reduce the songs... to an abbreviated form, like a telegram. "The tablet was a kind of cue-card consisting of catch-words which gave the singer only the gist of his verses; he had to fill in the missing words himself."

Rjabchikov

Sergej V. Rjabchikov believes *ronorono* to be "typical of other mixed ideographic and phonetic writing systems [which rely] on ideograms, phonograms, and generic determinatives." How they function is determined by their context (Rjabchikov, 1987).

At present Rjabchikov has published only brief translations of short glyph groups from a variety of tablets and tablet fragments. He has not expressed a coherent explanation of his methods or the implications of his "translations." In his fragmentary translations he has revealed myths, calendar lists, texts about raising crops and fishery as well as what he feels are Peruvian religious traditions. In this connection he says he can verify Heyerdahl's comparison of the Peruvian king Tupa-Inga with the Easter island *ariki* Tupa Ringa Anga, as well as presenting similarities between various Peruvian and Polynesian gods. In expressly *hoping* to confirm Heyerdahl's theory it is likely that Rjabchikov went out to find the legends in the *Aruku Kurenga* and the *Large Lenningrad* tablets. A similar approach was taken in 1892 by Carroll, in his attempt to loosely link the diverse dialects of Central and South America to a translation of *ronorono*.

His "Shorter Communication" of 1988 in *JPS* is particularly significant, for he boldly states that "attempts at decipherment based on Metoro's readings are bound to be fruitless or erroneous." This is because Metoro gave different meanings to glyphs which were essentially the same—they contained insignificant variations. All of his work so far has been "based on the formal analysis of the texts."

Rjabchikov should be encouraged to proceed further with his study before presenting any further "progress reports." Once he can

present himself in a sustained form, outlining his full translations, methods, conclusions, etc., as a harmonious whole, his work will be of service. The possibility of harmony, I believe, is doubtful.

Of particular help in understanding Rjabchikov's method is Jacques B. M. Guy's excellent addendum to Rjabchikov's brief explanations. His meticulous analysis, albeit necessarily tedious, points out both the potentiality and pitfalls of Rjabchikov's approaches. Guy wisely notes that at present it is premature "to assign any readings to the glyphs at this stage." The only "meaning which is known beyond reasonable doubt, is a fragment of Tablet Mami... shown by Barthel to contain a lunar calendar." Guy appears to have a clearer view of Rjabchikov's methodology than Rjabchikov himself.

Kaulis

Another recent study with questionable value is Andis Kaulis' 1981 study, *The Astrological Zodiac in the Script of Easter Island*. His abstract, in part, reads: the [Honolulu Tablet #B.3622] "contains an ancient version of the astrological zodiac, thereby providing probative evidence of the relation of this mysterious megalithic culture to those of Old World Europe." He also gives observations concerning a possible Indo-European origin of the language of Rapa Nui and selected evidence to ties to the high cultures of Central and South America. Unlike Rjabchikov, Kaulis is not attempting to *translate rongorongo* but instead discovered similarities between the short text on one of the Honolulu tablets and the zodiac signs used in the Western world. Three at least seem extraordinarily similar, while others less so. (Figure 10)

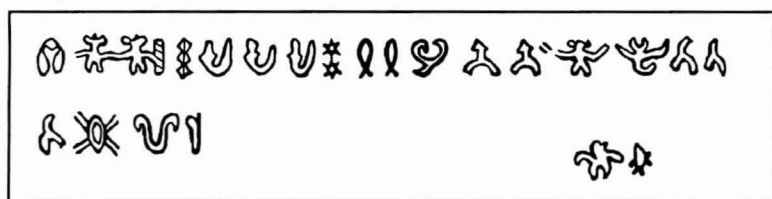


FIGURE 9: Glyphs as they appear on Honolulu Tablet

Fell

I recently received a video tape from the Epigraphic Society. In it Dr. Barry Fell claims (like Barthel) to have found the "key" to the decipherment of *rongorongo* through a linguistic reassessment of the Jaussen "translation." Fell differs with Barthel's interpretation of Metoro's translation by saying Bishop Jaussen simply misheard Metoro. Jaussen did a poor job of transcription. Refuting current scientific belief, Bell says the translations are quite comprehensible if one has an intimate knowledge of Polynesian languages—which Fell claims to have. Observing his procedure on video, one must also be able to see through the eyes of a poet, much as Fell has done.

Vignes

Jacques Vignes, a young amateur from Paris, is currently attempting to solve the *rongorongo* mystery with the use of computers.

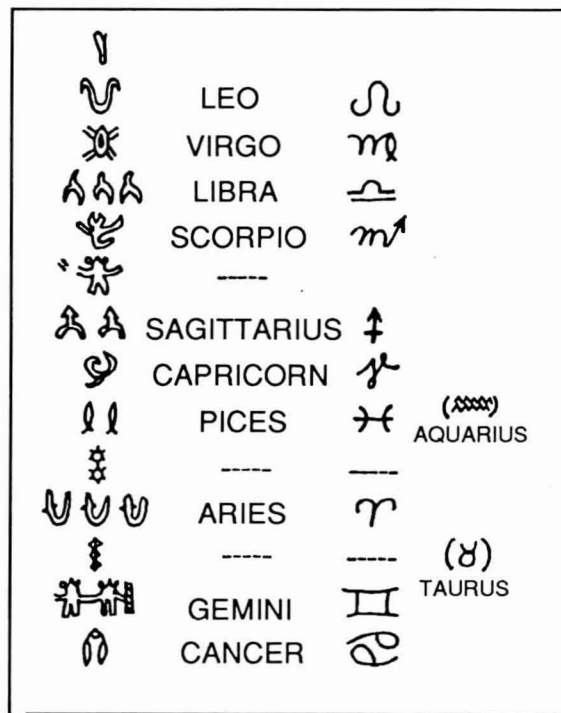


FIGURE 10: Kaulis' Zodiac -Rongorongo Correspondences

He presented a paper at the recent symposium "Status and Perspective of Easter Island" at the Senckenberg Museum and appears to believe that Barthel's approach is incorrect. I did not receive a reply from M. Vignes in time to include an exposition of his work here. It will be reviewed in the final installment of this series.

Emory's Comments

Although Emory did not attempt a translation, he did feel that "the correct definition of the written language of Easter Island was given by Professor Olderogge, who compares it with the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics *at the early stages of development.*" (Italics mine.)

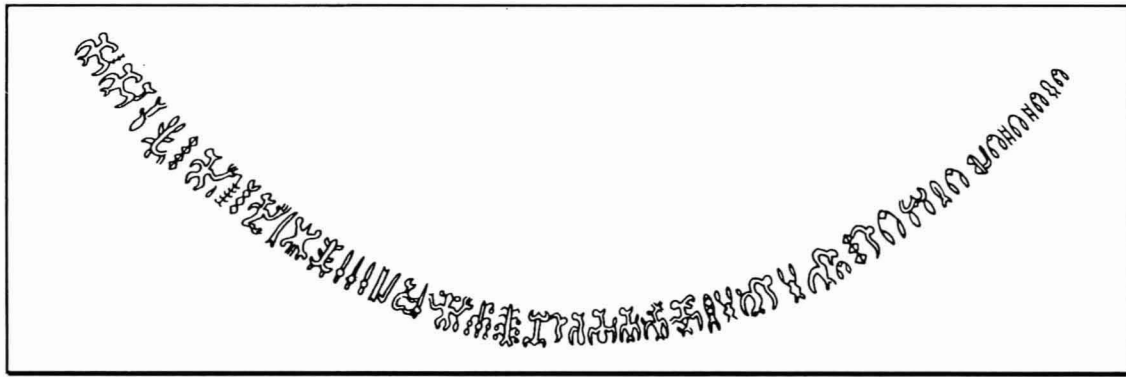
Emory's belief that *rongorongo* had an historical origin has been mentioned above. Aside from its provocative challenge it is not seriously considered by today's researchers.

How Can I Make a Rongorongo Tablet?

Much has been written concerning historical experiences with *rongorongo* as well as assertions, declarations and conjectures by both professionals and amateurs on the "translations" of the still essentially undeciphered "boards." But what about the actual techniques used by the *maori rongorongo*, the art and design used to create them?

One can appreciate the artistry alone. In 1870, members of the English Ethnological Society upon their first cursory viewing of paper impressions of *rongorongo*, assumed they were woodblocks used for printing patterns on cloth. The artistry has always been apparent.

Just as we observe different "quality" *tanata manu* (birdmen) sculptures at the ceremonial center of Orongo, likewise we have

FIGURE 11: Glyphs on the London *Rei Miro* (Barthel, 1989)

today a wide spectrum of technical expertise evident in samples of *rongorongo* as well as the glyphs on other museum pieces. *Arouku-Kurenga*, *Mamari* and the Large Leningrad Tablet are examples of *rongorongo* art at its finest; and with the exception of the Santiago Stick, the London *Rei Miro* (Figure 11) is the prime example of glyph writing on an object other than the boards.

To view the “best” glyph etchings is alone enough to attest to their authenticity—that is, the precise and intricate craftsmanship of the “best” type would have been a developed art and not something made slap-dash in the late 1800’s to impress “outsiders” or to stimulate the still fledgling tourist market. Upon their discovery by outsiders, the Rapanui were reluctant to part with their precious “boards.” Unlike other wooden sculptures, *rongorongo* were not duplicated by local artists and so were not open for trade. It can be inferred that the boards were among the islander’s most precious possessions—if indeed the early missionaries were correct when they said that although each house had many and yet no one would part with one. Even after the question of their heathen use was overlooked by the missionaries, the Rapanui still would not part with them. Up into the 20th Century, parting with *rongorongo* was considered *tapu*. A variety of mishaps have been reported whenever attempts were made to turn secretly held tablets over to outsiders (cf. the forthcoming chart: **Comparative Rongorongo**).

Tradition tells that novices “made” their rongorongo on the outer sheaths of the banana leaf, while the initiated carved on wood—more usually *toromiro*—although many of the *rongorongo* boards we have today were made from “European woods.”

As Métraux (1940:393) eloquently describes:

The signs are incised on both faces of a tablet. Between each row of signs is a low ridge, produced by slightly sunken channels or flutes along which the signs have been engraved. On the tablet called *Aruku-kurenga*... these channels are 1.5 cm. wide. The channels were produced by longitudinally adzing the piece of wood. The carver must have held the plank in the vertical position with the left hand and formed the plane surface by striking regular blows with his adz. The signs are outlined by angular grooves of varying depth. The skill displayed by the artist is masterly; all the signs are incised with a

freedom, a keen appreciation of proportion, and a vigor that only an expert artist could accomplish. There is a good sense of movement and harmonious combination of conventionalized and naturalistic elements.

It appears that the *tangata rongorongo*, or the scribes who created the tablets, took extra care to fit a particular set of glyphs onto the boards. The rows of glyphs wind their way evenly back and forth across a board, but at the very end they are often spaced more tightly together, as if in an effort to fit them in. Here is an observation worthy of mention, for it an argument used to legitimize *rongorongo* as actual writing. If singular glyphs had no individual meaning, what would it matter if one or two were missing. The act of attempting to fit particular glyphs in at the end of a line intimates that the “board” would be incomplete without them.

Métraux states “The wood used for the tablets was selected casually before the signs were incised. It is not possible that the [tangata] rongorongo knew in advance that a chant would fit the tablet. The ‘text’ was adapted to the tablet and not the tablet to the ‘text’ (Métraux 1940:404).

An analysis of the woods used to create the existent tablets shows them to be made from *lauraceae myrtaceae, fraxinus excelsior, thespesia populnea, podocarpus latifolia* and *pyrus malus*. (Lavachery 1934.) It is obvious that any flat, hardwood would be acceptable and as mentioned previously, the Rapanui felt the same way, for the tablet *Aruku Kurenga*, for example, was carved from the oar of a European ship. The sides of some tablets are beveled; this may have been to give the carver space for more glyphs.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Unfortunately, because of space limitations, the remainder of this article will be continued in the next issue of *Rapa Nui Journal*. Included there will be answers to the questions “Do the Traditions Continue Today?, Are There Any “Wild Theories?” and *Are There Parallels with Other Rapa Nui Art?* Also included in the Spring issue will be the long awaited (and extensive) “Road Map to *Rongorongo*” listing each artifact’s vital statistics and brief historical comments on all known tablets and fragments as well as the numerous other items containing *rongorongo*-like glyphs.

NOTES

- ¹The transliteration of the Rapanui term *ronorongo* as used in this article differs from the more popular "*rongorongo*." Although the nasal velar "ŋ" is most regularly written "ng," it does not indicate to the uninitiated ear the Rapanui pronunciation of this letter grouping. Selecting the preference for "ŋ" in this article serves to emphasize the proper pronunciation, which can only be approximated by the English or Spanish "ng." Visitors to the cave Ana Kai Tangata on Rapa Nui witness the "ŋ" for the first time when they discover a bold, hand-carved sign announcing the site as "Ana Kai Tarāta." For an incidental explanation of the use of "ŋ" in Rapanui, particularly as it relates to a linguistic refutation of Thor Heyerdahl's Rapa Nui colonization theory, see Schumacher, 1989.
- ²The current total individual glyphs on all tablets and fragments not taking into consideration duplications, or confusions between single figure glyphs (*rona*) and composite glyphs (glyphs containing more than one incised object) is over 12,000. This number of glyphs on a particular tablet varies greatly, depending on who is doing the counting.
- ³Alberto Hotus Haoa, personal communication, 1988.
- ⁴1500 Jahre Kultur der Osterinsel (1500 Years on Easter Island)
- ⁵Tomenika appears to be his baptismal name. His true Rapanui name is Vaka Tuku Onge a Teatea. This clarification has important significance in connecting Tomenika to certain modern Rapanui manuscripts which have secretly been copied and apparently re-copied during the early 20th Century.
- ⁶Tradition tells us there were two kinds of script, the *ronorongo* of the boards which was reserved primarily for religious ritual and a second form of writing, *tau*, used for secular purposes, that is, recording annals, etc.
- ⁷Barthel said the script on the Santiago Staff is calendric in nature and is linked with both the 27 1/2 and 29 1/2 day periods of the moon.
- ⁸Rjabchikov, personal communication, 1988.

SOURCES

(This is a list of sources which have dealt with the subject of *ronorongo*, and as such is non discriminatory. Most have been used in the preparation of this series.)

- Amorós i Gonell, Francesc. 1989. The "Rei-miro" of Barcelona and Its Inscriptions. *Rapa Nui Journal*. Vol. 3, No. 3.
- Ahnne, E. 1933. Les Hiéroglyphes de l'Île de Pâques. *Soc. d'études Océaniques*, Bull. Vol 5, no. 47. pp 185-193. Papeete.
- Barthel, Thomas. 1957. Die Hauptgottheit der Osterinsulaner. *Jahrbuch des Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, 15:60-82.
- . 1958. The "Talking Boards" of Easter Island. *Scientific American*, vol. 198, no. 6, pp. 61-68. June.
- . 1959. *Grundlagen zur Entzifferung der Osterinselschrift*. Series B., Vol. 26. University of Hamburg. Hamburg.
- . 1962. Easter Island Place-Names. *Journal de la Société Océanistes*. Vol 8, no 18.
- . 1963. Rongorongo-Studien. (Forschungen und Fortschritte bei der weiteren Entzifferung der Osterinselschrift). *Anthropos*, Vol. 58. Fribourg.
- . 1963. Diskussionbemerkungen zu einem Rongorongo-Text. *Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 12. Budapest.
- . 1965. Native Documents from Easter Island. *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition*.
- . 1974a. *The Eighth Land: The Polynesian Discovery and Settlement of Easter Island*. University Press of Hawai'i. Honolulu.
- . 1974b. Maui auf Osterinsel. *Anthropos*. Vol. 69, no. 5/6.
- . 1989a. Eingekerbte Vergangenheit: Die Zukunft der Rongorongo-Studien. *1500 Jahre Kultur der Osterinsel*, Esen-Baur, von Bothmer-Plates, Sauer, eds. Philipp von Zabern, Mainz.

- . 1989b. *Work in Progress, Summer 1989: in preparation for "Courier Forschungsinstitut Senckenberg" Wege Durch die Nacht*. Rongorongo-Studien auf dem Santiagostab, or Paths through the Night: Rongorongo Studies Decode a Secret Pattern on the Santiago Staff, a paper read before the symposium "Status and Perspective of Easter Island Research." Research Institute of the Senckenberg Museum. Frankfurt.
- Brown, J. MacMillan. 1924. *The Riddle of the Pacific*. T. F. Unwin. London. (AMS Reprint, 1979.)
- Butinow, N. A. and Knorosov, J. 1956. Wstępny Raport o Studiach nad Jezykiem Pisanym Wyspy Wielkanocnej. Paper read at the Leningrad Ethnological Conference.
- . 1957. Preliminary Report on the Study of the Written Language of Easter Island. *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. vol. 66.
- Campbell, Ramón; Nuriluz Hermosilla; José Miguel Ramírez. 1982. *La Ngarua o Almohada de Piedra de la Isla de Pascua*. Actos del IX Congreso Nacional de Arqueología Chilena. La Serena.
- Carroll, A. 1892. The Easter Island Inscriptions and the Way in Which They are Translated, or Deciphered, and Read. *JPS*. Vol 1, no. 4. pp. 103-106, 233-253. London.
- Churchill, William. 1912. *Easter Island, The Rapanui Speech and the Peopling of Southeast Polynesia*. Carnegie Institution of Washington.
- Croft, Thomas. 1864. Two letters to Prof. George Davidson, President of the California Academy of Sciences. In *Easter Island: the Rapanui Speech and the Peopling of Southeast Polynesia* by William Churchill, 318-323. Carnegie Institute Pub. No. 174. Washington, D.C. 1912.
- Dalton, O. M. 1904. The Easter Island Script. *Man*. No. 78.
- Echeverría y Reyes, Anibal. 1910. Datos sobre los Jeroglíficos de la Isla de Pascua. Congreso Internacional de Americanistas, Actas. Buenos Aires. p. 444.
- Emory, Kenneth. 1947. *Tuamotuan Religious Structures and Ceremonies*. B. P. Bishop Museum. Bulletin 191, pp. 37-38.
- . 1963. Review of "Archaeology of Easter Island." *American Antiquity*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 565-567.
- . 1968. Review of "Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific, Vol. 2." *American Anthropologist*. 70, pp. 152-154.
- Englert, P. Sebastian. 1939. *Tradiciones de la Isla de Pascua*. (In Rapanui and Castellano) La Comisión de Estudios de la Isla de Pascua, Universidad de Chile. Imprenta San Francisco, Padre Las Casas.
- . 1974. *La Tierra de Hotu Matu'a: Historia y etnología de la Isla de Pascua*. Ediciones de la Universidad de Chile. Santiago.
- . 1978. *Idioma Rapa Nui (Gramática y Diccionario)* Edición de la Universidad de Chile. Santiago.
- Ezow, Edward. 1959. Na Wyspie Wielkanocnej. *Noew Czas*. No 22 and 23. May. pp. 27-28.
- Fairservis, Walter. 1983. The Script of the Indus Valley Civilization. *Scientific American*. Vol 238, no. 3. March.
- Fedorova, I. K. 1965. Versions of Myths and Legends in Manuscripts from Easter Island. *Reports of the Nor. Exp.*
- Fevrier, James G. 1948. *Histoire de l'Ecriture*. Payet. Paris.
- Fell, Barry. *Untitled Videotape on Rongorongo Translation*. 40 Minutes.
- Fuentes, J. 1960. *Diccionario y Gramática de la Lengua de la Isla de Pascua*. Santiago, Chile.
- Gary, Tom. 1982. The Easter Island Boards. *Ancient Skies*, Jan.-Feb. The Ancient Astronaut Society.
- Geiseler, Kapitänlieutenant. 1883. *Die Oster-Insel*. Eine Stätte prähistorischer Kultur in der Südsee. Berlin. —English Translation in Anon. Manuscript.
- González, Eugenio Albert Gaeto. 1976. Las Tabletillas Jeroglíficas de Isla de Pascua. From the Seminar *Chile y Sus Islas Oceanicas*. Instituto de Estudios Internacionales. Universidad de Chile.
- Guy, Jacques B. M. 1985. On a fragment of the 'Tahua' tablet. *JPS*. 94, 367-388.
- . 1988. Rjabchikov's Decipherments Examined. *JPS*. Vol 97, no. 3, pp. 332-334.

- Haserlandt, M. 1886. Die Schrifttafeln von der Osterinsel. *Anthrop.* Gesell. Wien, Mitt. Vol 16, pp. 97-102.
- . Ueber Schrifttafeln von der Osterinsel. *Globus.* Vov 61, pp. 274-277.
- Heine-Geldern, Robert von. 1938. Die Osterinselschrift. *Anthropos.* vol. 33.
- Hevesy, Guillaume de. 1933. Sur une Ecriture Oceanienne Paraissant d'Origine Neolithique. *Soc. Prehist Francaise Bul.* p. 434 ff.
- . Oceanie et Inde Prearyenne, Mohenjo-Daro et l'Ile de Paques. *Boll. des Amis d l'Orient.* pp. 14-15.
- . 1938. The Easter Island and the Indus Valley Scripts. *Anthropos.* vol. 33.
- Harlez, C. de. 1896. *L'ile de Pâques et ses Monuments Graphiques.* Louvain.
- Harrison, J. Park. 1874. The Hieroglyphics of Easter Island. *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, vol III, pp. 370-382, 528. London.
- Heyerdahl, Thor. 1965. "The Concept of Rongo-Rongo Among the Historic Population of Easter Island." Report 16, *Reports of Nor. Exp.*
- . 1975. *The Art of Easter Island.* Doubleday & Company. New York.
- . 1989. *Easter Island—The Mystery Solved.* Random House. New York. Published in Sweden as *Påskön, en gåta som fått svar*, by Bokförlaget Bra Bocker, Höganäs.
- Hunter, G. R. 1934. *The Script of Harappa and Mohenjodaro and its Connection with other Scripts.* London
- Imbelloni, José. 1951. Part I: Las Tabletillas Parlantes de Pascua, Monumentos de un Sistema Gráfico Indio-Oceanic. Part II: Nuevas Indagaciones Sobre Pascua. *Runa IV*, pp. 89-177 and 220-236. Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. University of Buenos Aires.
- Jaussen, Tepano. 1893. L'Ile de Pâques: Historique et écriture. *Bulletin de Géographie, Historique et Descriptive* 2. 240-70. Paris.
- Kaulins, Andis. 1981. *An Astrological Zodiac in the Script of Easter Island.* Origins: Studies in the History of Mankind & Its Languages. Vol IV. Darmstadt, Germany.
- Knorozov, J. V. 1964a. Recorded Statements at Izvestija's Round Table Conference. August 10, 1964, in "Kon-Tiki" plyn ne zrja, *Izvestija.* August 12, 1964, p. 4. Moscow.
- . 1964b. Poiskach Kliüca. *Nedelia.* August 2-3. Moscow.
- . 1965. Manuscripts from Easter Island. Appendix B to Report 16 in Heyerdahl and Ferdon. pp. 391-94.
- Kondratov, A. M. 1965. The Hieroglyphic Signs and Different Lists in the Manuscripts from Easter Island. Appendix D to Report 16 in Heyerdahl and Ferdon. pp. 403-411.
- Kudrjavev, Boris G. 1949. Pis'mennost' Ostrova Paskhi. *Sbornik Muzeja Antropologii i Etnografii* 11, vol XI, pp 176-221.
- Lavachery, Henri. 1933. Tablette "Keiti." *Bulletin of the Soc. des Americanistes de Belgique.* August 1933, pp. 101-102.
- . 1934. Les Bois employés dans l'Ile de Pâques. *Bulletin de la Société des Américanistes de Belgique*, No. 18, pp. 67-71. Bruxelles.
- Lee, Georgia. 1986. *Easter Island Rock Art: Ideological Symbols as Evidence of Socio-Political Change.* Ph.D. dissertation. U. of California.
- . 1989. Some comments on [the article] "The BBC and Easter Island History" by Peter Gathercole. *Pacific Arts Newsletter* 29:30-32, July 1989.
- Lehmann, Walter. 1907. Essai d'une Monographie Bibliographique sur l'Ile de Pâques. *Anthropos.* Vol 2, pp. 141-151, 257-258. Salzburg.
- Machowski, Jacek. 1969. *Island of Secrets: The Discovery and Exploration of Easter Island.* 1975 trans. by Maurice Michael. Robert Hale. London.
- Martinez, E. 1913. *Vocabulario de la Lengua Rapa-Nui, Isla de Pascua.* Sección Impresiones del Instituto Meteorológico. Santiago, Chile.
- Métraux, Alfred. 1937. The Kings of Easter Island. *JPS*, vol 46.
- . 1938. The Proto-Indian Script and the Easter Island Tablets. *Anthropos*, vol 33.
- . 1938. Two Easter Island Tablets in the Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu. *Man.* No 1.
- . 1940. *Ethnology of Easter Island.* Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 160. Honolulu, Hawai'i. Reprinted 1971.
- . 1947. The Mystery of the Easter Island Script. *South African Journal of Science.* August.
- . 1957. *Easter Island: A Stone Age Civilization of the Pacific.* London.
- Maclay, Miklukho. 1872. Ueber die 'Rohau Rogo Rogo' Oder die Holztafeln von Rapa Nui. Gesell. F. Erkunde. Zeit. Vol II, No. 7, pp 79-81. Berlin.
- Mazière, Francis. 1965. 1968. *Mysteries of Easter Island.* W.W. Norton & Comp. New York.
- Mulloy, William, Arne Skjólsvold and Carlyle Smith. *American Anthropologist.* Vol. 66, pp. 148-49.
- Ojeda, Carlos Charlin. 1980. *Los 491 Jeroglifos de la Tabilla Meno Chilena "Mu'a au Mingo Ata'i Hoa Au" y su Traducción al Español en Versión Libre de C. Ch. O. Ms.,* collection of author.
- Olderogge, D. A. 1946. Parallelnye Teksty Niekotorych Jeroglificzeskich Tablic s Ostrova Paschi. *Sovietskaja Etnografija, Akademii Nauk USSR*, No. 4, pp. 234-238.
- . 1946. Parallelnye Teksty Tablic Ostrova Paschi. *Sbornik Muzeja Antropologii i Etnografii*, vol XI, pp. 222-236.
- Palmer, J. Linton. 1875. On Some Tablets Found on Easter Island. *Proceeds of the Literary Society of Liverpool.* Vol. 30, pp. 255-263.
- Philippi, Rudolfo Amado. 1875. De la Escritura Jerografica de los Indigenas de la Isla de Pascua. *Anales de la Universidad de Chile.* November 1975, pp. 670-683.
- Pinart, A. L. 1878. Exploration de l'Ile de Pâques. *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie.* vol. 16, 193-213. Paris.
- Ratzel, Federico. 1888. *Las Razas Humanas.* Momtanery Simon. Barcelona.
- Routledge, Katherine Scoresby. 1919. *The Mystery of Easter Island.* London. (AMS Reprint, 1979.)
- Rjabchikov, 1987. Sergej V. Progress Report on the Decipherment of the Easter Island Writing System. *JPS.* Vol 93, no 3.
- . 1987. Religious Records in the Easter Island Tablets. *Rapa Nui Notes* #5.
- . 1988a. Allographic Variations of Easter Island Glyphs. *JPS.* Vol 97, no. 3, pp. 313-320.
- . 1988b. Note on Butinov and Knorozov's Investigation. *Rapa Nui Journal.* Vol 2, No. 2.
- . 1988c. Interpretation of an Easter Island Placename. *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationforschung.* Berlin. Vol 41, no 6, pp. 807-808.
- . Incas on Easter Island? Unpublished manuscript.
- Sahlins, Marshall D. 1955. Esoteric Efflorescence in Easter Island. *American Anthropologist*, 57, pp. 1045-1052.
- Schuhmacher, W. Wilfried. 1989. *The Linguistic Aspect of Thor Heyerdahl's Theory.* Carl Winter. Universitätsverlag. Heidelberg.
- Schwartz, Jean-Michael. 1975. *The Mysteries of Easter Island.* trans. Lowell Bair. Avon Books.
- Stephen-Chauvet, Dr. 1936. *L'île de Pâques et ses Mystères.* Spanish edition *La Isla de Pascua y Sus Misterios.* Zig-Zag. 1945, 1965.
- Stuart, David and Stephen D. Houston. 1989. Maya Writing. *Scientific American.* Vol. 261, No. 1. August.
- Thomson, William Judah. 1891. "Te Pito te Henua, or Easter Island. Report to the U. S. National Museum." *Annual Report for 1889*, 447-552.
- Van Tilburg, Jo Anne and Georgia Lee. 1987. Symbolic Stratification: Rock Art and the Monolithic Statues of Easter Island. *World Archaeology*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp 133-149.
- Wolff, Werner. 1948. *Island of Death (Easter Island).* J. J. Augustin. New York.



Recent Publications Regarding Rapa Nui

Finney, Ben, Richard Rhodes, Paul Frost, and Nainoa Thompson. Wait for the West Wind. *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol.98(3):261-302. 1989.

Martin, Ph., and G.T. Poppe; Notes on the mollusca of Easter Island: *Cypraea*. *Hawaiian Shell News*, Hawaiian Malacological Society, Vol. XXXVII(10); p.1,7. Oct 1989. An interesting article on shells used by islanders for making necklaces for the tourist trade. The authors point out that the pale brown examples of *Cypraea caputdraconis* are that color due to being boiled in oil in order to give color variation in the necklaces. Many conchologists believed that these pale shells were a variant of the species, particularly as islanders claimed that the variations were due to proximity to the surface, with those living "in the sun" being paler than shells "living deeper." The authors state that this is pure fantasy: "...everybody knows that the Polynesians like to joke with tourists and scientists and on Easter Island probably more than elsewhere."

Heyerdahl, Thor. 1989. *Easter Island—The Mystery Solved*. Published in Sweden as *Påskön, en gåta som fått svar* by Bokförlaget Bra Böcker, Höganäs. The bibliographic info after the title page erroneously notes an index. A review may be forthcoming.

Heyerdahl, Thor, Arne Skjølsvold and Pavel Pavel. The "walking" moai of Easter Island. *Occasional Papers 1*, Kon-Tiki Museum, Oslo. Pp.36-64. 1989.

King, Michael. *Moriori: A people rediscovered*. Auckland, New Zealand. 1989. Reviewed here by W. Schuhmacher:

I did a lot of walking during my first visit to Easter Island in 1989. To my delight, one day a car stopped and gave me a ride. The driver turned out to be a former helper of Heyerdahl's; however, he did not agree with his "master's" South American theory, suggesting instead that the early Polynesian settlers had come from New Zealand because

the two languages, Rapanui and Maori, had "much in common." So I then took a closer look at Maori and Moriori, both the people and their languages. The Morioris, restricted to the Chatham Islands today, differed from the Maori in many ways.

The Moriori language is characterized by a phonology of its own; they lacked tattoo, they had a marriage ceremony, their huts were conical and bound together at the top, and they used rafts instead of canoes.

Their history has been written by Michael King, largely to clear away misconceptions that have appeared in the course of time. The book reveals who the Morioris are, where they came from and the effects on them of both Maori and Pakeha colonization. It can be commended particularly to those readers who are confused about the nature and origin of these much maligned peoples.

Martin, Ph. and G.T. Poppe. More Notes on the Mollusca of Easter Island. *Hawaiian Shell News*, Vol.37(11):5-6. 1989.

Osorio, Cecilia and Victor Cantuarias. Vertical Distribution of Mollusks on the Rocky Intertidal of Easter Island. *Pacific Science*, Vol.43(4):302-315. 1989.

Seaver, Joan. *An Ethnology of Wood Carving: Continuity in Cultural Transformations on Rapa Nui*. Ph.D. Dissertation, UCLA 1988. Authorized facsimile available from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Rd., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

Schuhmacher, W. W. Linguistic Notes. *Fontes Linguae Vasconum: Studia et documenta*, XXI(53). Pamplona, Spain. 1989. [This paper discusses the evidence for Basque influence on Easter Island.]

Skjølsvold, Arne and Gonzalo Figueroa. An attempt to date a unique, kneeling statue in Rano Raraku, Easter Island. *Occasional Papers 1*, Kon-Tiki Museum, Oslo. Pp. 7-35. 1989.

Corrections

Please note the following corrections/additions to "The 'Reimiro' of Barcelona" by Francesc Amorós i Gonell which appeared in Vol. 3:3 of *RNJ*.

The caption to Table 4 should read: The tumu-miro Sign. Aka-aka should read aka-kore.

The glyph shape like the glyph in Table 5 does not appear on the fish-shaped tablet found in the Concepción Museum.

Glyphs I and J in Table 6.3 should be:



In the same table the reader should note the K, L, M modalities could not accept a possible anthropomorphical interpretation.

Ramón B. Campbell's name was incorrectly spelled.



Announcing—

—a unique guide to Rapa Nui and its archaeological sites. Includes maps, drawings, 110 full-color photos, references, glossary and index. \$18.95. Free US shipping with this ad.

Georgia Lee, Ph.D. interprets Rapa Nui's rock art for archaeologists, travelers, students and photographers. Her authoritative, entertaining and straightforward guidebook debunks popular misconceptions. Essential for the visitor; fascinating for the armchair traveler.

Send check or money order to:

International Resources

P.O. Box 840, Arroyo Grande CA 93421-0840

January 1990



MRL UPDATE™

EASTER ISLAND FOUNDATION CREATED

MRL Groundbreaking Date Set

In December 1989, members of the Easter Island Committee of the World Monuments Fund reorganized themselves as the Planning Committee for the Mulloy Research Library.

Also newly established at that time was the Easter Island Foundation, a wholly independent non-profit organization incorporated in California. The MRL will still greatly benefit from the World Monuments Fund's generous \$100,000 challenge grant. All funds formerly donated for the Mulloy Research Library and held by the WMF will be transferred to the new EIF to be specifically earmarked for the first EIF project, the construction and maintenance of the MRL on Rapa Nui. The Library will honor Dr. William Mulloy, archaeologist and former professor at the University of Wyoming (see *Rapa Nui Notes*, v. 7).

At the EIF Executive Board meeting, the following officers were appointed: Dr. William Liller, Chairman of the Board of Directors of EIF; Dr. Joan T. Seaver, President of EIF and Director of Fundraising; Alan Davis-Drake, Vice President and Treasurer; and Dr. Georgia Lee, Vice President and Liaison to the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will provide technical advice on investments, library planning, organization, construction, etc. The four committees now structuring the EIF are a Board of Directors, an Executive Committee composed of the foundation officers, an Advisory Committee and a Fundraising Committee.

Among the topics discussed were the need for a document to show the full support of the present government of Chile as well as an overall plan for fundraising activities. The latter will also include a series of monographs on scientific aspects of the island such as petroglyphs, the stone moai, *rongo rongo* glyphs, modern church statues, and archaeological dating techniques. Also planned are several fundraisers for the next two years. One will be the long awaited fundraiser at Bill Mulloy's home base, the University of Wyoming.

In addition, gallery shows featuring photographs and other images of Rapa Nui, as well as modern carved wooden sculptures, are being considered as public relations efforts toward raising funds for the MRL. Under consideration is a South Pacific cruise in connection with Society Expeditions Cruises, Inc., of Seattle, Washington. Look for future announcements in *Rapa Nui Journal*.

The Library Continues to Grow!

Two additions to the MRL's current inventory are an Easter Island bibliography of medical, genetic and population related literature from the graduate school of Biomedical Sciences at the Health Science Center of Houston's University of Texas, and we hope soon to have the bibliography compiled by the late Robert Alexander and currently being edited by Prof. Charles Love of Western Wyoming College. The latter is to be published by the Bishop Museum. Plans are already underway to incorporate these bibliographies into the Library's computer based master bibliography—which will soon be established.

Thanks to You, It's Soon to Happen!

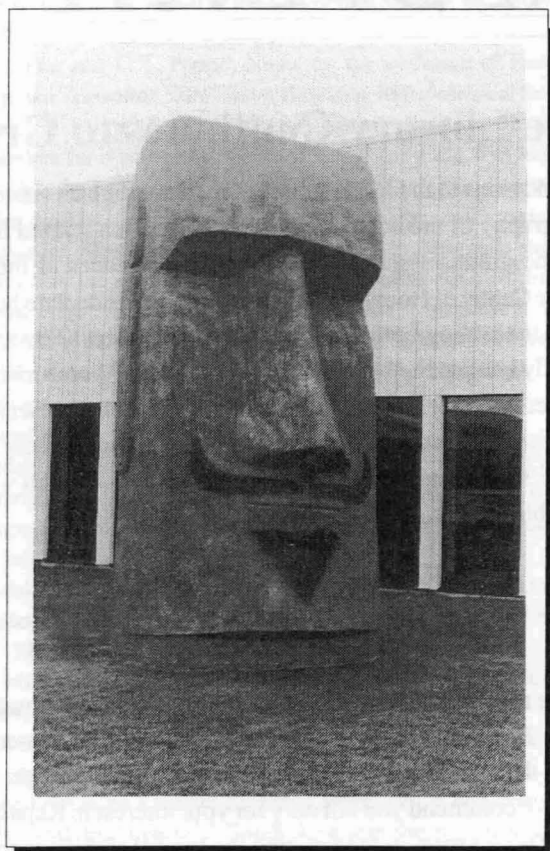
We thank all of you who have contributed so generously to the Mulloy Research Library in the past, and we are pleased to announce that actual construction of the building will begin early in 1991. We commend you not only for your interest in Rapa Nui, but also for your vision in recognizing the topical significance of preserving the scientific data describing the ancient society and its demise. Certainly the research center formed by the Mulloy Research Library and Sebastian Englert Archaeological Museum will provide the island's present population with a much needed symbol of their Polynesian heritage.

The Executive Committee of the EIF encourages you to join us in continuing your support and dedication to MRL. For information about the EIF or to send your donations, contact Dr. Joan T. Seaver, at EIF, P. O. Box 1319, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272-1319 USA, or phone (213) 454-7993. Please make your checks out to the *Easter Island Foundation*.

AVAILABLE! Deluxe Tour of Rapa Nui!

Before September 23, 1990, donors of \$10,000 (or more) to the Easter Island Foundation will enjoy one expense free round trip airline ticket from the U.S. (New York, Miami or Los Angeles) to Rapa Nui, including several days at a luxury hotel in Santiago for two. Also included are excellent accommodations for two on the island. A special bonus will be a personally tailored tour of the latest archaeological findings at Rapa Nui sites. All this—plus the famous Polynesian hospitality! For details, please contact Dr. Joan Seaver.

The Toronto Moai



The *moai* lives at 900 Don Mills Road in Toronto. The statue is the result of a conversation between Alex Tilley and an artist from Ontario, Bob Breau of Willowdale. On a bet from Tilley, Breau made a *moai* from snow. Alex decided he wanted a more permanent one so Breau constructed one of wood and wire, covered with concrete. The *moai* sits on the front lawn of the Tilley business, which makes a line of clothing and hats. The moustache, put on as a joke, was recently removed. The *moai* is 15 feet high, weighs some 16,000 pounds and sits on a base hidden under the grass. The artist, Breau, also made an indian carving that sits on the lawn near the *moai*. (This information is supplied by the photographer, Rapanuiphile David Kotyk of Toronto).

What's New in Hanga Roa

It might be more accurate to call this the "Nothing's New" Column. It seems that little progress has been made on the island since our report last spring (*RNJ* Vol.3:1). In that issue, one year ago, we reported on the new rain gutters and the paving project on Te Pito Te Henua Street, the new school library building, and new offices and storage facilities adjacent to the Museum. No further work has been done on the street paving, rain gutters or sidewalks. The rain gutters have not even been roofed over. The rush of rainwater coming down the street has made conditions in the block below (in front of the post office) even worse than before. The library stands empty and unfinished; the building has been vandalized and windows broken. The museum storage facilities appear to be empty, but the museum offices are nearly completed and one office is now in use. The museum gift shop remains an empty shell, filled with weeds. There seems to be no consensus of opinion as to why all these projects remain in limbo.

However, there are new items. A laundromat is now operating at the corner of Hotu Matua and Policarpo Toro streets, a pool hall with 3 tables has been added on Policarpo Toro street, and in February a satellite dish is scheduled to begin operations to establish better telephone communications with the outside world. The airport addition is completed.

The count is in... One of our Easter Island correspondents reports that there are now 450 vehicles on the island, 150 of these are motorcycles!

Georgia Lee, Ph.D.
Publisher and General Editor

Alan Davis-Drake
Editor and Design

Rapa Nui Journal is an international newsletter published quarterly for the benefit of those interested in Easter Island and Polynesia. Correspondence, articles, photographs, drawings, reviews of books & films, announcements of conferences & publications, and all related materials are invited. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited items or anything submitted without adequate return postage or International Reply Coupon. If possible please send submissions on floppy disk for either IBM or Macintosh—in ASCII format.

Annual subscription rate for 4 issues, in US funds: U.S. \$15, Foreign Airmail \$25. Back issues are available at U.S. \$4 each, post paid.

ISSN 1040-1385 • © Georgia Lee 1990

RAPA NUI JOURNAL

P.O. Box 6774 Los Osos, CA 93412



Winter 1990

Page 16